PhD Opportunity
Identifying strategies to enhance Feedback Engagement in Healthcare and Medical Education

Supervisory Team

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Supervisors: Dr Julie Cooke, Senior Lecturer in Nursing

Research Group: Health Professions Education and Practice

The PhD Opportunity

Background

Feedback is widely recognised as critical for learning, yet students often struggle to interpret. When feedback is poorly understood, it can lead to disengagement, reduced confidence, and missed opportunities for improvement, particularly for students from widening participation backgrounds.

These challenges are particularly evident in healthcare education, where faculty members are increasingly expected to support students in making sense of feedback despite operating at a distance from the original assessment process. For example, in OSCEs and other centrally coordinated assessments, tutors working with student to understand and forward plan following feedback, may struggle to interpret feedback they did not produce and coach students on events they did not observe. Similarly, in knowledge-based assessments, those assisting students often have no direct role in the organisation, question writing process, delivery, marking and/or psychometric evaluation of the assessment. This disconnect can create gaps in learning and hinder remediation efforts.

Research Gap

While feedback literacy and dialogic feedback approaches have gained attention, current research rarely explores how third-party feedback conversations, where tutors are not the original assessors, impact student engagement and learning outcomes in healthcare education. There is limited evidence on structured approaches that enable these conversations to be effective and meaningful. Addressing this gap is essential to strengthen feedback culture and improve student success.

Aims

The aims of this project are to (1) Identify barriers and facilitators to effective feedback engagement in healthcare education from both student and faculty perspectives (2) develop and evaluate structured feedback interventions that enable Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) and faculty—who are not the original assessors—

to conduct meaningful feedback conversations that help students interpret and act on assessment feedback and (3) generate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen feedback culture, improve student engagement, and enhance academic performance across healthcare education settings.

Applicants may consider these factors in specific student groups, or may choose to focus on the delivery of feedback in a specific subject area.

Application Process
To begin the application process please go to
https://www.worc.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/applying-for-a-phd/.

The Interview
All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Doctoral School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

Funding your PhD
For information about Doctoral Loans please visit: https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx

During your PhD you can access the Research Conference Support Scheme to support the costs of presenting your research at an external conference.

Research at the University of Worcester
Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- **Human Health and Wellbeing**
- **Sustainable Futures**
- **Digital Innovation**
- **Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion**
- **Professional Education**

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

Research Degrees at Worcester

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2025 in which we ranked 3rd for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in his area is the Doctoral School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

Widening Participation

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

For further information or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Professor Rebecca Stack r.stack@worc.ac.uk